

NUMBER XXV JULY 2005

BREAKING GROUND

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE TENNESSEE COUNCIL ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES



Thanks in part to the Benefits to Work Project, Gene Allmendinger of Memphis launched a new career as a professional photographer. [14]

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COVER PHOTO AND PHOTOS ON PAGE 16 BY Gene Allmendinger, GFA Photography, Memphis.

CONTACT INFORMATION



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JOURNALISTS VISIT VANDERBILT TO EXPLORE AUTISM

By Clinton Colmenares and
Melanie Catania



Kennedy Center director Pat Levitt discussed brain organization and development during the recent media fellowship on autism. Photo credit: Daniel Dubois / Vanderbilt University

Vanderbilt's autism specialists shined for health care reporters who spent April 10-13 on campus learning about the wide array of autism spectrum disorders.

The media fellowship, "Living with Autism: Rates, Causes and Treatments," drew nine journalists from around the country, from outlets including CNN, *People* magazine, *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* and *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, for sessions with faculty to learn about how the spectrum is defined, the rising incidence of the disorders, the controversial vaccine link, and the hunt for associated genes. Faculty from across the Medical Center

and Peabody College, most of whom are investigators for the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center for Research on Human Development, participated.

Temple Grandin, an author and assistant professor of animal behavior at Colorado State University, gave the keynote lecture. Dr. Grandin is probably best known for sharing how having Asperger's syndrome has helped her design more effective and humane machines and processes for handling and slaughtering cattle and swine. Her new book *Animals in Translation* goes into detail about how she "understands the way animals think."

In her talk, Dr. Grandin described how she came to realize that she "thinks in pictures" and discovered how that differs from most other people. She relayed data that tracks the areas from which people log onto her Web site for information – two of the top-10 cities consistently are Redmond, Washington, home of Microsoft, and Silicone Valley. This, she said, helps illustrate a high concentration of people with Asperger's and increased incidence of autism. But, she said, society needs to refrain from making "computer nerd" a diagnosis.

A highlight of the program was a field trip to Gower Elementary in Bellevue, where a team from Vanderbilt's Treatment and Research Institute for Autism Spectrum Disorders, or TRIAD,

instructs teachers in using proven methods of educating children with autism. A parent panel also spent almost two hours with the fellows describing their children and the challenges they face, from obtaining an accurate diagnosis to accessing helpful services.

"I am optimistic that we will see changes in the nature of reporting about autism from this group of journalists . . . changes that will hopefully spread to their peers," said Wendy Stone, professor of pediatrics and psychology and director of TRIAD. "The participants were a remarkably talented and conscientious group of individuals who asked the right questions and are enthusiastic in their efforts to do the right thing."

The fellowship was endorsed by CASE, the Counsel for the Advancement and Support of Education, and was sponsored by the University News Service and the Medical Center Office of News and Public Affairs.

Clinton Colmenares is national news director for Vanderbilt University Medical Center; Melanie Catania is a public affairs officer in the Vanderbilt News Service.

This article originally appeared in the Vanderbilt Register. It was reprinted with Vanderbilt University's permission.

INTERNET RESOURCES

TRIAD (Treatment and Research Institute for Autism Spectrum Disorders):

www.TRIADatVanderbilt.com

Autism Spectrum-Health Topics, Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital:

www.vanderbiltchildrens.com/autism

Autism Society of Middle Tennessee: **www.autismmidtenn.org**

Autism Society of America: **www.autism-society.org**

Cure Autism Now: **www.cureautismnow.org**

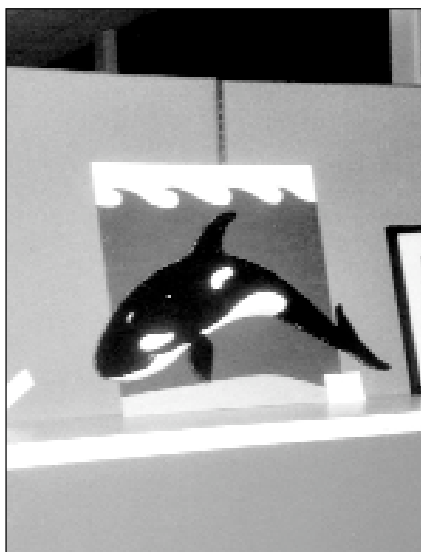
National Alliance for Autism Research: **www.naar.org**

CREATIVE EXPRESSIONS By Kathy "Jelly Bean" Rector

All people need avenues for self-expression in their lives. Creative Expressions of Art takes the lead in developing the supports and services that enable individuals with physical and developmental disabilities opportunities for expressing themselves through the creative arts—visual art, clowning, puppetry, interpretive movement, music, signed music, and drama. Its design promotes a person-centered philosophy and lends itself to positive supports for self-discovery, creativity, and self-expression.

Individuals living and working at Greene Valley Developmental Center and friends from the community collaborate in both the visual and performing arts. This diversified group consists of artists, musicians, magicians, actors, dancers, photographers, clowns, puppeteers, developmental technicians, speech/language pathologists, occupational therapists, and mental retardation program specialists. They allow creative moments to happen.

The Creative Expressions Visual Arts program began in October 2000 with 20 students. The artists have received recognition through various publications and media coverage, including *Tennessee Crossroads* and WNPT-TV



Two-dimensional painting by Creative Expression artists

in Nashville. Local newspapers have featured the artists in various exhibitions and mural projects as well.

Art comes alive in a full array of color as artists experience the feeling of self-expression and creativity. Art designs range from simple monochromes to intense multicolored designs. Sizes range from 2" X 3" note cards to 13' X 30' wall murals. Each masterpiece is unique and each is impressive. Artists participate in gallery shows, festivals, and local, regional, and statewide art competitions/exhibitions. Eight individuals are recognized this year as published artists. Another artist's painting was selected for the T-shirt design for the 2005 Tennessee Disabilities MegaConference. Several artists have designed note cards for the *From the Heart* State Parks project. While some pieces of art have become additions to private collections, others are enjoyed at public exhibitions.

The Creative Expressions Performing Arts program began in 2003, when



Terri Wilson with Virgil Webb as Ginger and Fred

seven people performed in the Very Special Arts Festival Talent Show and won First Place. Their desire to continue in the performing arts led these talented individuals to form the theater group known as "The Comedy Folks." With the support of assistive technology and adapted equipment, The Comedy Folks plan and perform each production. This very creative group chooses the theme, writes the scripts, selects the music, does the choreography, and designs the costumes and stage sets. Some of the productions include "The Christmas Story," "Thank God for The Radio," and "The Long Branch Saloon." The Comedy Folks geared up for their rendition of the



Kathy Rector with Amy Dittmar and Jackie Cienski in Dance of the Mimes

"Hee Haw Show," performed in late spring.

Creative Expressions currently supports 80 visual artists and 52 performing artists. Annual events include the Creative Expressions & Friends Art Exhibition (first week in November) and the Very Special Arts Festival (second week in October). Both events are held on the Greene Valley campus and are open to the public.

Many of the techniques for creativity used for art expression can be carried over into everyday life experiences. Learning to relax and "tap" into the inner self and allowing the creative juices to flow is essential in meeting the challenges of providing creative opportunities. The philosophy of the Creative Expressions of Art is:

"If you can wiggle your toes,
YOU CAN DANCE.
If you can smile, YOU CAN SING
If you can breathe,
YOU CAN DREAM!"

***Kathy Rector is a mental
retardation program specialist
at Greene Valley.***



Bud Meece with Ray Armentrout and Dan Gallogly as The Bums



Robert Miller, Ray McMahan, and Tom Silva



James Ewton at Pinewood

ONE-STOP CENTERS FOR FAMILIES

By Elise McMillan

The Vanderbilt Kennedy Center, along with State partners and local agencies, is nearing completion of creating a plan for implementing a Family Support 360 One-Stop Center for Families. The One-Stop Center is part of a national initiative of the federal Administration on Developmental Disabilities (ADD).

"Having a family member with a developmental disability is many things. It should not be a challenge. But so often it is a challenge. This may be because human service systems sometimes are designed for human service systems, not families, nor individuals with developmental disabilities," according to Pat Morrissey, ADD Commissioner.

An individual with a developmental disability acquires the disability before the age of 22, and often faces the need for a wide range of services and supports in order to engage in activities of daily living. Individuals with significant intellectual disabilities, autism, or cerebral palsy are examples of individuals with developmental disabilities. With the right combination of services and supports, individuals with developmental disabilities and their families stay together, participating in the full range of community life, according to Dr. Morrissey.

Twenty-one states that received funding in an earlier grant competition are actually implementing plans for One-Stop Centers, while another nine states have \$100,000 funding each to plan such centers. It is hoped that these states will be able to compete for future funding to implement their plans.

The ADD, part of the Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, funds Family Support 360 grants through Title I, Subtitle E, Projects of National Significance (42 USC 15081 through 15083), of the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000 (42 USC 15000 et seq.) (DD Act).

In those 21 states with implementation grants, for five years between 2004 and 2008, the states will provide family support to 50 families of individuals with developmental disabilities through a One-Stop. The families helped are to be members of unserved or underserved populations. Through the One-Stop, a family is to experience a family assessment and participate in the development of its individual family plan.

Each of the Family Support 360 implementation grantees was one of 31 grantees that received a Family Support 360 one-year planning grant of \$100,000 in 2003, awarded on a competitive basis. In 2004, these

31 grantees competed with each other again for implementation grants (\$250,000 per year for five years). ADD had sufficient funds to award 21 implementation grants. In 2004, ADD also funded another round of one-year planning grants at \$100,000 each. Tennessee and the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center received one of these grants.

Having a family member with a developmental disability is many things. It should not be a challenge. But so often it is.

The project team at the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center includes Elise McMillan, JD, director of community outreach; Jan Rosemergy, PhD, director of communication services; Carol Rabideau, LCSW, family outreach social worker; Rick Urbano, PhD, Kennedy Center research database analyst and research professor of pediatrics; Teresa Turnbo, family outreach program coordinator.

In Tennessee, the Boling Center of Excellence on Developmental Disabilities, the Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities, Tennessee Protection and Advocacy, People First of Tennessee, the State Family Support Council, and Rep. Sherry Jones have been involved in the initiative. Additionally, The Arc of Davidson County, Pacesetters of Cookeville and Crossville, and Overcomers Ministry have been involved.

PARTNERSHIP AN OPPORTUNITY FOR TENNESSEANS WITH DISABILITIES

In other states, programs that are implementing the one-stop centers have accomplished the following:

- ONE GOVERNOR HAS PLACED \$450,000 IN HIS PROPOSED BUDGET TO SUPPORT AN EXPANSION OF HIS STATE'S FAMILY SUPPORT 360 GRANT
- FAMILIES ARE HELPING OTHER FAMILIES INFORMALLY TO LEVERAGE THE REACH OF GRANTS
- DISABILITY-RELATED AGENCIES AND ORGANIZATIONS ARE WORKING FOR THE FIRST TIME WITH GENERIC HUMAN SERVICE AGENCIES IN THEIR COMMON EFFORT TO HELP FAMILIES
- INFORMATION FOR FAMILIES ABOUT DISABILITY-RELATED AND GENERIC SERVICES HAS BEEN TRANSLATED INTO SPANISH
- EFFECTIVE SOFTWARE IS BEING USED THAT FACILITATES TRACKING FAMILY SUPPORT
- FAMILY SUPPORT 360 PROJECTS ARE WELCOMED AS A GOOD WAY TO HELP CUSTOMERS IN STATES WITH TIGHT BUDGETS
- SOME FAITH-BASED AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS HOUSE FAMILY SUPPORT PROJECTS
- MEMORANDA OF UNDERSTANDING AND OTHER INTERAGENCY AGREEMENTS ARE WORKING TO FACILITATE PROJECT OPERATIONS AND ACCESS FUNDING STREAMS
- PROJECTS ARE OPERATING INFORMATION AND REFERRAL EFFORTS BEYOND THE 50 FAMILIES THEY ARE TO ASSIST DIRECTLY ON AN ANNUAL BASIS
- PROJECTS HAVE COMPLETED EXTENSIVE RESOURCE MAPPING AND DISSEMINATED THIS INFORMATION

A final report will complete the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center's Planning Project. For information, contact Elise McMillan, director of community outreach, 615-343-2540, or elise.mcmillan@vanderbilt.edu.

Energized by a presentation at an Olmstead Coalition Employment Summit held in January, 2003, a group began discussions about replicating a transition to employment program for high school students with disabilities who are approaching graduation. A partnership between State agencies (the Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities, the Tennessee Department of Human Services [DHS], the Tennessee Division of Mental Retardation Services and the Williamson County School System) and private organizations (Vanderbilt University Medical Center and Community Options, Inc., a community rehabilitation program) was formed and an idea became a reality.

"Project Opportunity" is a pilot career training and employment program to help high school students with disabilities find full-time employment. DHS's Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) will work with students in their last year of high school. After successful completion of the program, the students will be eligible for full-time employment at Vanderbilt Children's Hospital. The pilot program will begin assisting students in the Transition School to Work Program from the Williamson County School District this Fall.

"Project Opportunity is a wonderful example of state government working with partners in the private sector for mutual gain," said DHS Commissioner Gina Lodge. "This program will benefit our clients, the hospital and the community."

The pilot program is modeled on Project SEARCH at the Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center. Representatives of Project SEARCH made the presentation that sparked the development of the Tennessee program. Project Opportunity is targeted to students whose main goal is competitive employment. About a dozen students will take part in the program over the next school year, which requires total immersion and on-the-job training in the healthcare setting.

"We have no doubt that this will be a successful program," said Terrell Smith, director of Patient/Family Centered Care for Vanderbilt University Hospital and the Clinics. "We will start small and gradually build it up. Project Opportunity will make a difference in many lives."

The DRS has cooperative agreements with 46 school districts across the State, including Williamson, Robertson, and Cheatham Counties in Middle Tennessee. These agreements are part of the Transition School to Work Program, which provides a continuum of services to students with disabilities enrolled in public schools. The objective of the Transition School to Work Program is to develop joint educational, training and vocational plans and goals for students with disabilities in order to bridge the gaps between the formal educational program and the world of work.

"Our goal is for Project Opportunity to expand to employment for many more adults with disabilities," said Wanda Willis, executive director of the Council on Developmental Disabilities. "Project SEARCH currently has over 80 people with disabilities employed throughout Cincinnati Children's Hospital."

12TH PARTNERS CLASS GRADUATES

By Ned Andrew Solomon

Twenty-three members of the 2004-05 Partners in Policymaking™ Leadership Institute class graduated on Saturday, April 23, in a ceremony at the Millennium Maxwell House Hotel. Partners director, Ned Andrew Solomon, and Council executive director, Wanda Willis, handed out graduation certificates, Partners pins, and a group photo of the class with Representative Susan Lynn and Governor Phil Bredesen, taken at the Capitol the day before.

Ginny Cooke from Chicago's Phoenix Perth Institute gave the graduates her now-legendary humorous and poignant send-off, following her informative morning presentations on Working with the Media and Allies in Action. Friday afternoon the Partners reported on their final homework assignments, which involved meeting with their own legislators to discuss the Partners' most important disability concerns. Friday night the group displayed numerous skills, including poetry writing and reading, painting, quilting, singing, and telling stories in the annual Partners Talent Show.

All in all it has been a wonderful eight months for the Partners, the Council staff, and the State of Tennessee, which has just received another batch of trained, enthusiastic advocates and self-advocates.

Ned Andrew Solomon is the director of Partners in Policymaking™ for the Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities.

THE TENNESSEE COUNCIL ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES IS PROUD TO PRESENT THE FOLLOWING GRADUATES FROM ACROSS THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

BETTY ANDERSON, MEMPHIS
 SHERRY BRANSFORD, NASHVILLE
 PAM BRYAN, MADISON
 CANDIE FERRELL, NASHVILLE
 RENEE FORD, MEMPHIS
 PATRICIA HORNICK, LOUDON
 JESSICA LAWHORN, KNOXVILLE
 ROBERT LEATHERWOOD, MADISON
 JAWANDA MAST, BARTLETT
 ELIZABETH "MISSY" MITCHELL, NASHVILLE
 RICHARD MOORE, NASHVILLE
 MADELINE NICHOLS, BLOUNTVILLE
 CYNTHIA POWELL, NASHVILLE
 JOE RAINWATER, DEL RIO
 KELLY SANDERS, JOHNSON CITY
 PAUL SEABERG, PARIS
 JANE SMITH, DEL RIO
 REVIS SPARKMAN, NASHVILLE
 KENDAL SUMMERS, NASHVILLE
 AMY TERRY, MEMPHIS
 TERESA TURNBO, LAVERGNE
 CAROL VAN CLEAVE, LAKELAND
 BETTY WALKER, KNOXVILLE



NED SOLOMON,
 KENDAL SUMMERS,
 AND WANDA WILLIS



GOVERNOR BREDESEN AND MADELINE NICHOLS



CLASS WITH GOVERNOR AT CAPITOL



NED SOLOMON, JESSICA LAWHORN, AND WANDA WILLIS



JOE RAINWATER



NED SOLOMON, PAUL SEABERG,
AND WANDA WILLIS



NED SOLOMON, MATTHEW MOORE, RICHARD MOORE, AND WANDA WILLIS

MEET THE 2005 YOUTH LEADERSHIP FORUM CLASS

By Ned Andrew Solomon

I am thrilled to announce that the 2005 Youth Leadership Forum class has been selected. By the time you read this, **20 OUTSTANDING** high school student delegates with disabilities from across the State of Tennessee will have met each other, engaged in thoughtful discussion groups, learned about numerous disability-related topics from local and national speakers, and been downtown for a tour of the Capitol, a session with a Legislator, and a mentor luncheon with West Coast keynote speaker Peggy O'Neill.

This is the fifth exciting year the Forum has been held in Tennessee. The delegates below were accepted from our largest pool of applicants in three years! As in the past, this is an impressive group of students who have broken ground in their schools and communities—sometimes in their own homes! They are athletes, school and civic club members, part-time employees, cheerleaders, musicians, singers, actors and dancers, disaster relief volunteers, student council representatives, science and technology wizards, religious youth program participants, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, tutors—you name it, they've done it!

Here they come:

TABITHA BURNS, RUTHERFORD COUNTY
BRITTANY CARTER, SHELBY COUNTY
ASHLEY CHUNN, HICKMAN COUNTY
LARK DUNCAN, SHELBY COUNTY
LINDSEY ELLIOTT, HAMILTON COUNTY
LINDSEY EPPOLITO, BLOUNT COUNTY
WILLIAM FERRELL, DAVIDSON COUNTY
KALA FREEMAN, MARSHALL COUNTY
MIGUEL GARCIA, MCNAIRY COUNTY
JOHANNA HILL, DAVIDSON COUNTY
JESSICA HOBSON, FAYETTE COUNTY
RANDAL JACKSON, SHELBY COUNTY
RACHEL JAMERSON, SHELBY COUNTY
EDWARD MITCHELL, MADISON COUNTY
BRIDGET OGDEN, DYER COUNTY
CAIN OWENS, BEDFORD COUNTY
CHRISSY STATUM, WILLIAMSON COUNTY
JACQUELINE SULLENGER, COFFEE COUNTY
LYNDA VON MAURER, SHELBY COUNTY
KEVIN WARNER, WILLIAMSON COUNTY

It has become a tradition at *Breaking Ground* to highlight a few of the selected students and present excerpts from the essays submitted with their applications. Meet the next generation of leaders and self-advocates raising the bar in a community near you.

Brittany Carter, Shelby County, Memphis-Delta

"I am an 18-year-old junior at Ridgeway High School and a member of the Student Council. I am the first person with a disability to serve in this capacity at Ridgeway. I have a twin sister with cerebral palsy and the things I learn will benefit her as well...I love being a part of any forum that will make this world a better place for people with challenges."



"Before attending Ridgeway High School, I attended Ridgeway Middle, a newly built school that was accessible to physically challenged people, except for the doors. I went to the principal and explained that the doors needed to have the push panel, which would allow me to enter without any assistance. The principal took my issues before the board and shortly

after the doors were made accessible. He always thanked me for bringing it to his attention."

Ashley Chunn, Hickman County, South Central Tennessee

"One major disability I have had for five years is being bipolar, as well as having a learning disability and OCD (obsessive compulsive disorder). Bipolar is depression that rises and falls. You can be extremely happy one minute and extremely sad the next. I have had this since my eighth grade, and it followed me to my freshman year in high school. I would cry and not talk. I felt no one could help."



"OCD threw me for a loop. I had a time with that in school. My work would not get done at school because I wondered: am I doing this right? Is this wrong? What if the teacher does not like it? What do I do? I worried myself to death."

"I was accepted to Columbia State Community College...I was hopping for joy! It is exciting and scary all at once...God has blessed me with strength to get through this much of

high school and now accomplish the goals I have wanted to meet for years."

Will Ferrell, Davidson County, Mid-Cumberland

"The two people who have most influenced my life are my best friend, Grant Collier, and my mom, Candie Ferrell. Grant and I have been friends for the last three and a half years.



Grant does not have a disability, but is always willing to spend time with me doing 'normal' guy things...He makes me feel like a normal kid because that's how he sees me. My other most positive influence is my mom. She is always there for me, making sure that I have good support and lots of opportunities to do the things I want to do. Since I was a baby she has said, 'where there's a WILL there's a way.'

"There are many experiences that stand out in my life where having a disability has been aggravating to me. One of the most aggravating times occurred when I received a citywide award at Martin Luther King Magnet School but was unable to go on stage to receive it because the stage was not accessible. In spite of the aggravation, good did come of it since I was later interviewed by *The Tennessean*, and accessibility in schools got extra attention."

Lindsey Eppolito, Blount County, East Tennessee

"I know I have many talents to share but I do have some disabilities...I have good problem-solving skills, and I am a kind person. I would like to make a difference in our world. I am quali-



fied because I have daily challenges I must overcome. I know how it feels. I also know we can all succeed if we try.

"My mom is my biggest cheerleader and my greatest teacher....She has always told me, 'you can do anything you put your mind to!' 'I can't' just was not accepted. She never gave up on me, and I know she never will. We make a good team, but I want to do more for myself."

Kala Freeman, Marshall County, South Central Tennessee

"Our class recently went to the child development center here in our county and I had a wonderful experience. I learned that all children are special, and that they all learn differently and



in their own way. I think going here leads me to believe that I someday want to be a special education teacher.

"My mom, Kim Young, has been a positive influence. She is a positive role model for many reasons. My mom also has osteogenesis imperfecta and she has not let it slow her down. She at times has difficulty walking but toughs it out and goes on. My mom is in her last two years of college and is going to be a special education teacher. She currently works 40 plus hours at a wilderness program for boys and girls with behavior problems and attends school at night. What an inspiration!"

Miguel Garcia, McNairy County, Southwest Tennessee

"I want to attend the forum because I feel strongly that individuals with disabilities should have equal rights. The fact that I have



a significant disability has played a large role in shaping my life. I want to learn skills to advocate for myself and others with disabilities.

"My general health is very poor due to my disability. I cannot participate in contact sports. In August 2004 I had a near death experience when my shunt stopped working. My medical problems have made me a stronger person mentally and emotionally and have influenced my career goals. I want to go into the medical profession upon completion of high school. I want to help other individuals the way my doctors and nurses have helped me. I am currently planning on attending Jackson State Community College to earn a diploma in radiology."

Jessica Hobson, Fayette County, Memphis-Delta

"The experiences I have had as a young person with a disability have been really bad. I was scared and embarrassed; I was afraid to read aloud and I did not like school. It was very hard, but my grandmother, Alma Johnson, and my mom, Sheila Hobson, were there for me. Without them and God I don't think I would have made it this far!



"Everything happens for a reason. This is why God made me, so I can help others who do not have disabilities to understand and be grateful. But most importantly, help them to know they do not need to feel sorry for people like me. We need your help, not your sympathy. Sympathy will not enable us to learn. I want to decrease the idea of people thinking we are different. We are not different; we just have to work a little harder than most people."

Continued on next page

THE COUNCIL'S MISSION



The Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities provides leadership to ensure independence, productivity, integration, and inclusion of individuals with disabilities in the community through promotion of system change.

WHAT IS THE COUNCIL?

The federal Developmental Disabilities Act created a council in each state and

the five territories to provide citizens with disabilities the opportunity to improve state service systems. The Tennessee Council consists of 21 persons who have disabilities or family members with disabilities and who represent the State's nine Development Districts. The Council also includes representatives of private and State agencies that provide services or administer funding for disability-related services.

PROMOTING SYSTEM CHANGE GRANT PROGRAM

The Council promotes innovative demonstration projects through time limited grants in areas such as housing, voting, public transportation, health care, employment, and child care.

PUBLIC POLICY

The Council works with State and fed-

eral legislators and public and private policy-makers to improve the lives of persons with disabilities and their families.

LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

Two programs bring Tennesseans with disabilities and their family members together to learn about disability issues and enhance their leadership and self-advocacy skills.

PUBLICATIONS

The Council publishes two free publications (*Breaking Ground*; *Legislative Monitor*) to keep Tennesseans informed of disability issues.

AREAS OF EMPHASIS

HOME AND COMMUNITY-BASED SERVICES

Increase services and supports to

Continued on page 19

2005 YOUTH LEADERSHIP FORUM

Continued from page 11

Lindsey Elliott, Hamilton County, Southeast Tennessee



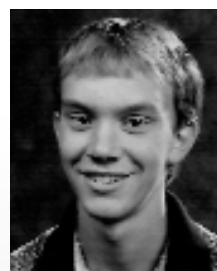
"My disability has always forced me into working harder than the other students. I was always the last to finish a test and schoolwork, placed in inclusion classes away from my friends, taught skills over and over until I finally understood. I have gained the character trait of perseverance due to this.

I have learned that if there is a will

then there is a way to find success. I'm not ashamed of my disability and I remind teachers and friends when I don't understand.

"I plan to attend UTC and major in physical therapy. I know that I will need to take less hours and it will take me longer to finish the program to get a degree. I also know that I will need to have extended time, books on tape, and proctors, but I also know that I am willing to try to achieve my goal in life and the greatest battle is behind me."

Cain Owens, Bedford County, South Central Tennessee



"I have been through a lot of hard things growing up. I want to attend because I feel this would be a great learning experience for me. I am shy around people I don't know, and this would be an opportunity for me to meet new people with disabilities like myself and learn from them. Maybe they could also learn from me.

"My parents have been a big influence in my life...They are always there for me. They never let me quit at anything. They have showed me that I am no different from anyone else and that I can do anything I set my mind to."

For more information about YLF, or if you would like a delegate or volunteer staff application for the 2006 class, please contact Ned Andrew Solomon, director, Partners in Policymaking™, Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities, 615-532-6556 or ned.solomon@state.tn.us.

TENNESSEE SPOTLIGHT

John T. Farley, of Memphis, was recognized at the National Football Foundation and College Hall of Fame Banquet and received the Mario Reed Courage Award! University of Memphis Coach Tommy West made the presentation. John T. is the 19-year-old son of Jerry and Brenda Farley (Partners '96) and a student at Germantown High School. John T. is also a 2003 Graduate of the Tennessee Youth Leadership Forum, and one of the essay and photo subjects in our Kindred book.

"Lizzy" Solomon, of Nashville, (featured in *Breaking Ground* Number XXI, November, 2004) won top honors in her age group at the Institute of Entrepreneurship's Young Business Entrepreneurs competition in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The 11-year-old Ms. Solomon's product is Lizzy's Line, greeting cards for all people that are designed to celebrate individuals with disabilities.

Carolyn and Richard Johnson, of Memphis, received the Jefferson Award from the American Institute for Public Service and *The Commercial Appeal* for their development of parent-governed community services for adults with developmental disabilities. Mr. Johnson (Partners '97) represented the Memphis Delta Development District on the Council on Developmental Disabilities (1998-2003).

Will Ferrell, of Nashville, will "job shadow" in the office of federal prosecutor James Neal this summer. Mr. Ferrell, who has cerebral palsy and is completing his sophomore year at Hillsboro High School, will be working with information systems people and learning about information handling needs in a legal environment.

Laurie Cribb Tuxbury, senior staff interpreter of the League for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing in Nashville has earned the Specialist Certificate: Legal from the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf. Only four other interpreters in Tennessee and 143 around the world have achieved this certification. Ms. Tuxbury studied the judicial system, ethical issues, models of interpreting, and best practices in working with a team of interpreters and with court personnel to prepare for the required exams.

Laurie Hobson, of Memphis, was named as one of 24 Outstanding Young Women of Memphis for 2005 by *Memphis Woman, the Success Magazine for Mid-South Women*. Ms. Hobson, 19, is a graduate of the Council on Developmental Disabilities Youth Leadership Forum ('01) and a member of Company D, a dance troupe sponsored by the Down Syndrome Association of the Mid-South.

Sam Gage, who lives in Selmer, received the Miracle Mile award from the "West Tennessee Employment Consortium" for achieving success in supportive employment. Mr. Gage, who is president of the Tennessee Microboard Association, won this distinction as the longest employee in supported employment on a job in West Tennessee. On July 20, 2005, he will have worked for 18 years. In 1972, Mr. Gage was one of the first people to leave the Arlington Developmental Center, eventually returning to his home community in Selmer. Mr. Gage and his twin brother, Bill, now own their own home.

UPCOMING ART ISSUE 2005

The editorial staff of *Breaking Ground* invite you to contribute to a special issue devoted to the arts coming in September 2005. All entries are to be submitted by July 15.

Do you write short stories or poetry? Do you paint, draw, or take pictures? Then we'd like to see your work for possible publication! The editor will consider:

- fiction up to 1,000 words and poems
- photos, and all forms of artwork

This material must reproduce well in black-and-white. Content is devoted to materials by or about people with disabilities.

We'll give contributors a prominent by-line, a biographical note, and copies of the issue. Include your name, hometown, and a two or three sentence biography with your submission.



PLEASE ADDRESS YOUR SUBMISSIONS

TO: *Breaking Ground* Arts Issue, c/o Kent Communications Group, 304C 10th Avenue South, Nashville, TN 37203 or

breakingground@vanderbilt.edu
Phone: 615-496-5955
Fax: 615-262-9036

CASHING IN ON YOUR CAREER TICKET

By Jon Kent

If you've ever applied for federal Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), you know how complex, challenging, and, at times, disheartening this process can be. So challenging, in fact, that once approved, protecting one's benefits becomes of paramount importance. Because income level is a key part of the eligibility equation, many recipients fear that employment will jeopardize their status. It is not only guaranteed income that is at stake, but perhaps more importantly to many, the Medicare/Medicaid health insurance that accompanies it. In short, incentives to work have often been outweighed by the risks involved.

In 1999, Congress enacted legislation to alter the incentive scales in favor of beneficiaries seeking employment and career development. The passage of the Ticket to Work and Work Incentive Act of 1999 dramatically changed the playing field, making federal funds available to seed career development and modifying policies to help protect existing benefits. Unfortunately, many SSI and SSDI beneficiaries still harbor fears based on outdated information; others, who are aware of the changes, remain daunted by the prospect of another federal government application process.

In 2001, in an effort to promote career development for people with disabilities across the State of Tennessee, the Statewide Independent Living Council and the Centers For Independent Living partnered to create the Benefits to Work Project. With a team of Benefits Specialists deployed across the State—in both rural and urban areas—the Project provides benefits planning, assistance, outreach, and management of employment supports to people who are trying to pursue, maintain or advance their careers. "We are here to help people navigate the system," said benefits specialist Hope Johnson from the Memphis Center for Independent Living. "People are intimidated by the application forms and technical

requirements to qualify for assistance; we receive special training from the Social Security Administration, and we help people with every step of the process."

One of the most popular new benefit programs available to promote career development among people with disabilities is the Plan for Achieving Self-Support, also known as PASS. Through the PASS program, individuals

develop a detailed plan for career development and apply for funds to support their efforts. Financial support is available for myriad costs associated with career development, from equipment start-up to transportation assistance to assistance with appropriate interview attire. According to Ms. Johnson, "The program is designed to remove all kinds of financial barriers to career development. As long as the expenses



Krystan Overstreet

are included in the person's approved PASS plan, they are reimbursable." PASS plans are flexible. Once approved, the recipient receives a monthly check from the Social Security Administration over and above pre-existing benefits, and then provides a report accounting how the expenses tie back to the outlined PASS plan. The length of the support depends on the length of the recipient's tailored PASS plan, typically varying from a few months to a few years.

PASS is just one of many innovative options available for people with disabilities interested in pursuing or advancing their careers. Benefits to Work Specialists have detailed information on a number of initiatives from the Social Security Administration designed to offer work incentives while protecting other aspects of the person's benefits package. "The bottom line," says Ms. Johnson, "is that if you don't know the rules, you get left out."

TWO PASS SUCCESS STORIES

KRYSTAN'S STORY

It took Krystan Overstreet three long years to qualify for SSDI benefits. This 31-year-old Memphis resident had experienced multiple health complications due to her long-standing battle with Type 1 diabetes, including problems with her eyesight, but the road to securing her benefits was anything but easy. Ms. Overstreet's dream to become a vocational rehabilitation (VR) counselor—to help others as she is being helped—was tempered by a fear of jeopardizing her SSDI: "It's really scary when you think about risking your Social Security benefits," said Ms. Overstreet, "especially Medicaid/Medicare health insurance. I had a transplant of my pancreas a year after I received my benefits, and the cost of the drugs I take as a result of this procedure is very, very high," she added.

Despite her apprehensions concerning her SSDI benefits, Ms. Overstreet enrolled as a graduate student at the University of Memphis to pursue a career in VR counseling. Soon, some of the unexpected costs



Gene Allmendinger

of pursuing a graduate school education, like maintaining reliable transportation to and from school, began to weigh heavy on her pursuits. While discussing this challenge with her own VR counselor, Ms. Overstreet was referred to Hope Johnson.

"Like most people, I had no idea that there were additional Social Security funds available to help me pursue my career goals," said Ms. Overstreet. "Hope advised me to pursue a program called PASS (Plan for Achieving Self-Support) to help build a bridge to a future career." "In my case, I needed help with my car so that I could travel to school; I needed funds to attend various professional conferences in my field; as well as a few other expenses to accelerate my education." Ms. Overstreet's PASS benefits provide monthly support until she completes her graduate school internship and is well on her way to living her dream.

Not only did Ms. Overstreet discover additional funds for her career development, the Social Security counselor also allayed her fears about

**Like most people,
I had no idea that there were
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pursue my career goals.**

losing health benefits once she is gainfully employed. "No one wants to live off of the government," said Ms. Overstreet, "but most people with SSDI, like me, can't afford to pay for our own health insurance. The way the system is set up now really works."

GENE'S STORY

On Friday, September 13, 1996, musician Gene Allmendinger from Memphis was involved in a serious automobile accident that resulted in a traumatic brain injury. Among other effects from his injuries, Mr. Allmendinger's motor skills were severely impaired. His career as a musician was over. Like many artists stripped of their original form of expression, Mr. Allmendinger soon found another creative medium: photography. The idea of opening a studio and pursuing photography as a profession appealed to Mr. Allmendinger, but he knew that there were some significant hurdles to overcome: "Usually people don't understand traumatic brain injuries. Although I can do my photography,

there are other aspects of running a business, like dealing with numbers, that I can no longer do," he added.

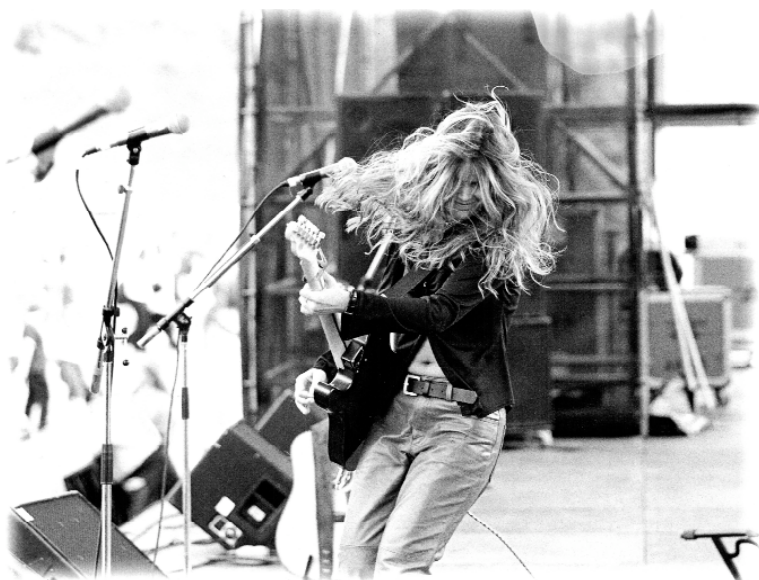
Like Ms. Overstreet, Hope Johnson helped Mr. Allmendinger apply for PASS funding from the Social Security Administration. His PASS plan requested supplemental income to hire an assistant to help manage a new photography studio—GFA Photography. Said Mr. Allmendinger: "Hope was great, she helped me do all of the things I needed to do to fill out my application and qualify for funding. I was approved. Now I have a part-time assistant and my business is up and running—I never could have done it without this support."

When it comes to his photography, Gene Allmendinger is a purist. He prefers black & white to color and is still a firm believer in the supremacy of film over digital formats. And, naturally, this one-time Memphis musician has a favorite subject he likes to capture with his lens: blues artists performing live.

For more information about Gene Allmendinger's photography, please call Brian at 901-517-5095.

Jon Kent is the editor of Breaking Ground and principal of Kent Communications Group in Nashville.

**If you would like to discuss the effect of employment on your Social Security benefits or would like additional information, please call the Benefits to Work toll free numbers:
1-888-839-5333 or
1-866-992-4568**



STUDENT RACES TO RAISE \$20,000 FOR VANDERBILT KENNEDY READING CLINIC

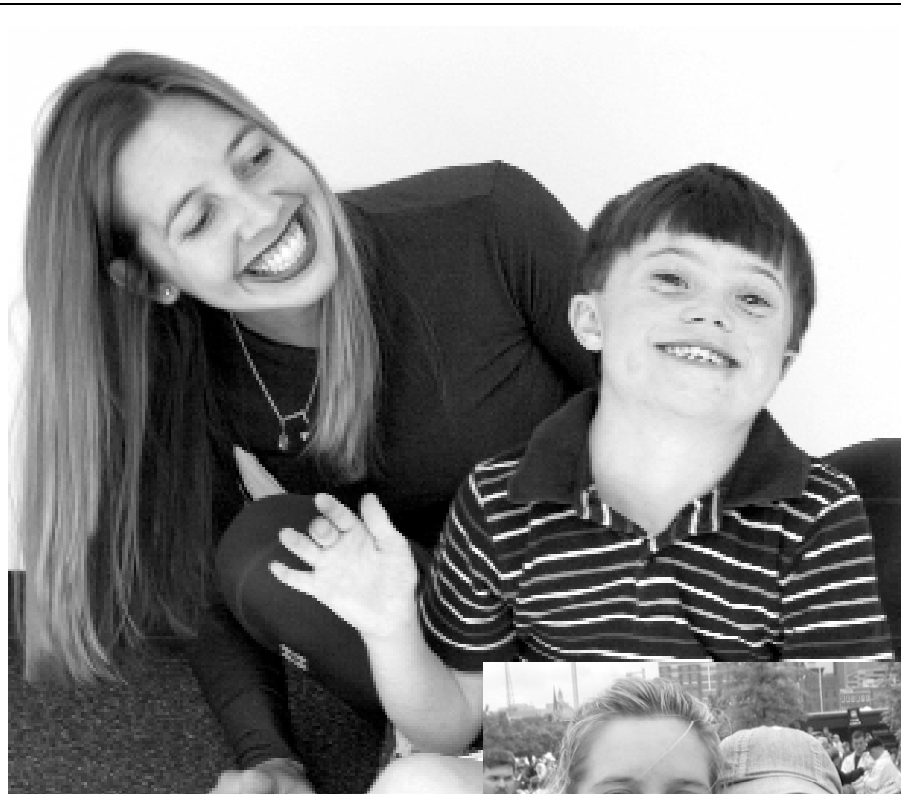
by Melanie Catania

Being a full-time graduate student and a volunteer tutor would be more than enough to keep most people busy. Not so for first-year special education graduate student Andrea McDermott, who decided this spring to launch a fundraising effort in honor of the eight year old she tutors at the Vanderbilt Reading Clinic, William Spickard, who has Down syndrome. Under the banner of Team William, Ms. McDermott ran the Country Music Marathon and raised nearly \$20,000 thus far in support of her cause.

William's mother, Margaret, joined Andrea and ran the half-marathon on Team William. His sister, Anna, designed a t-shirt with the logo "Running to Read," netting another \$1,000 for the clinic.

"This fundraising effort allowed me to combine two of my passions—working with the special needs population and pushing my body to its physical limits," Ms. McDermott said.

"We found Andrea in the fall of 2004 because we realized William needed extra time and someone with the energy and ability to bring curriculum to our home, which is an environment that is comfortable for him," William Spickard III, William's father and assistant professor of medicine and biomedical informatics, said. "She has done a remarkable job in bringing props and a plan to our home twice a week to help teach him how to read." William's grandfather, W. Anderson Spickard Jr., is Chancellor's Professor of



Top photo credit: Melanie Bridges/Vanderbilt University

Right photo credit: G. Bruce McDermott

Medicine and the medical director of the Vanderbilt Center for Professional Health.

"William's family and I agreed as a unit that reading is so important, and that if he can get that key knowledge base it really can spread to other areas," Ms. McDermott said. "We've also focused on math and do fun stuff too—he's a great football player and baseball player. William has a lot of positive energy. For him, for him it's important for you to always be happy. If you're enthusiastic, he's enthusiastic."

Ms. McDermott raised the funds to create scholarships in William's name to enable families of children with Down syndrome who might not



otherwise have the funds to do so to send their children to the Vanderbilt Kennedy Reading Clinic. Under the direction of Vanderbilt Kennedy Center investigators Doug and Lynn Fuchs, the clinic provides intensive one-on-one reading tutoring sessions to elementary school-aged children.

Melanie Catania is a public affairs officer in the Vanderbilt News Service.

This article originally appeared in the Vanderbilt Register. It was reprinted with Vanderbilt University's permission.

MEET COUNCIL MEMBERS FROM ACROSS THE STATE

By Ned Andrew Solomon

In recent issues of *Breaking Ground*, readers were introduced to the newest Governor-appointed members of the Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities and our existing Council members who have helped the Council plan and review its statewide initiatives, and who have been advocating for themselves and others in their own communities.



ANDREA L. COOPER, COUNCIL CHAIR

Hermitage, Davidson County

FAMILY MAKEUP: Single; no children

DISABILITY: C3 spinal cord injury

BIRTHPLACE: Biloxi, Mississippi

EMPLOYMENT: Permobil, Inc.,
Lebanon, TN

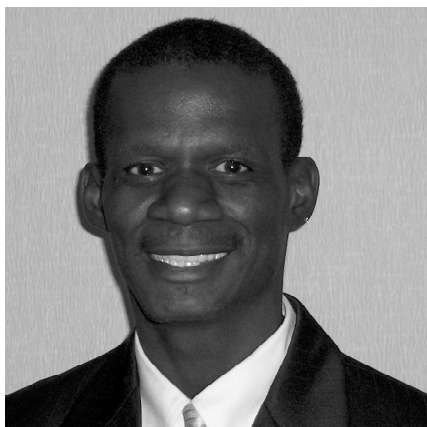
HOBBIES AND PASTIMES: Certified
general/civil mediator

AREAS OF INTEREST: Personal Care
Attendant training and recruiting;
home and community-based services;
transportation; voting

FAVORITE QUOTE: "Service is the
rent we pay for living. It is the very
purpose of life and not something you
do in your spare time."

—Marian Wright Edelman, founder of
the Children's Defense Fund

*Ned Andrew Solomon is the director
of Partners in Policymaking™ for the
Tennessee Council on Developmental
Disabilities.*



BARRON GARRETT

McMinnville, Warren County

FAMILY MAKEUP: Three sisters and
one brother

DISABILITY: Cognitive disability

BIRTHPLACE: Nashville

EMPLOYMENT: Wal-Mart, McMinnville
HOBBIES AND PASTIMES: Listening to
music and dancing

AREAS OF INTEREST: Employment
and the arts



RICHARD D. MOORE

Brentwood, Williamson County

FAMILY MAKEUP:

Two children: Matthew and Katie

DISABILITY OF FAMILY MEMBER:

Son has Down syndrome; age 15

BIRTHPLACE: Nashville

EMPLOYMENT: Attorney/Partner,
Levine, Orr & Geraciotti, Nashville

HOBBIES AND PASTIMES: Disability
advocacy and working in the yard at
home

AREAS OF INTEREST: Education;
empowering, educating, and training
parents of children with disabilities to
become better advocates

FAVORITE QUOTE: "We hold these
truths to be self-evident, that all men
are created equal, that they are
endowed by their Creator with certain
unalienable Rights, that among these
are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of
Happiness."—*The Declaration of
Independence by Thomas Jefferson,*
signed July 4, 1776

COUNCIL'S MISSION

Continued from page 12

enable individuals to live in their own homes and communities rather than in institutions.

EMPLOYMENT

Increase employment and training opportunities.

HOUSING

Increase opportunities to rent or own a home.

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

Increase access to assistive technology to support individuals to obtain jobs, participate in educational opportunities, and live independently.

EDUCATION

Promote school environments that respect differences and, through best practices, support the individualized needs of students with and without disabilities.

TRANSPORTATION

Increase access to additional transportation options and promote accessible public transportation.

CONTACT THE COUNCIL AT:

(615) 532-6615
tnddc@state.tn.us
www.state.tn.us/cdd



ALLIANCE FOR FULL PARTICIPATION

SUMMIT 2005



Register Now For the
Alliance For Full Participation Summit 2005
September 22-23, 2005
Washington Hilton and Towers
Washington, DC

www.AllianceForFullParticipation.org
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Plan to join over 1200 self advocates, family members, service providers, researchers and public policy experts in Washington, DC.

Together we will create an action agenda so that our vision of a world where people with developmental disabilities and their families realize the promise of integration, productivity, independence and quality of life choices becomes a reality.

What you can expect at the 2005 Summit:

- Exciting plenary sessions with speakers Martin Luther King, III, civil rights activist; Dr. Margaret Wheatley, organizational development specialist; and Roger Nierenberg, Stamford Symphony conductor.
- An interactive Town Hall session moderated by Frank Sesno of CNN, featuring engaging dialog and interactive debate, and using electronic polling machines to help attendees craft an action agenda for the future.
- Twenty-eight dynamic breakout sessions focused on leadership, community membership and self determination and enhancing the quality of supports and services that promise to highlight models of innovation and practice and bring new ways of thinking about existing challenges.
- On-site services and support for self advocates and family members.

For more information or to download a registration brochure visit:
www.AllianceForFullParticipation.org



2004-2005 TENNESSEE DISABILITY SERVICES & SUPPORTS DIRECTORY

2004-2005 Tennessee Disability Services & Supports Directory, published by the Tennessee Disability Pathfinder Office, is a source of information regarding state and local programs and services. The newest edi-

tion is available by geographic region (East, Middle, and West Tennessee). Order forms are available online at <http://kc.vanderbilt.edu/devents/order.html>





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